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SUBJECT: THE LEADING NPP PRESIDENTIAL CANDIDATES

REF: A) ACCRA 1962 B) ACCRA 1037 C) ACCRA 2451 D) ACCRA 2392

¶1. (SBU) SUMMARY: Only one more day remains in the race to select the next New Patriotic Party Presidential candidate for the 2008 election. In this two part series, Post will take a closer look at the leading candidates for the NPP's nomination and septel will focus on the internal dynamics influencing the NPP selection process. Seventeen candidates plus the sitting Vice President are seeking the NPP's nomination. Front runners are former Trade Minister Alan Kyerematen, former FM Nana Akuffo Addo, Vice President Aliu Mahama, and a few lesser known individuals. The race appears to remain open at this point, although President Kufuor is allegedly supporting Kyerematen. END SUMMARY.

The Battle for the Nomination

¶2. (U) As the December 22 NPP convention approaches, all signs indicate a close and unpredictable outcome. Presently, Alan Kyerematen, Nana Akuffo Addo, Vice President Aliu Mahama, Dan Botwe, Yaw Osafo Maafo and Hackman Owusu-Agyeman appear to be leading the race to become NPP flag bearer for the 2008 Presidential election. Ashanti, Eastern, Central, Western and Greater Accra Regions will be the battlegrounds for the NPP candidates. Tensions among supporters of Akuffo Addo, Vice President Mahama and Kyerematen have increased in recent weeks as campaigning has intensified. Many of the NPP candidates have run on their records as Ministers and other government experience and have given no indication that they would change Kufuor's current ruling policies if elected.

"Alan Cash", The Castle's Favorite Candidate

¶3. (U) With considerably more money than the other NPP nominees and the presumed support of President Kufuor, Alan Kyerematen, 51, is expected to win votes from most of the pro-Kufuor wing of the party, an estimated 30% of the votes. A former Ambassador to the United States, a founding member of the Chairman of the Young Executive Forum, an NPP fund raising group, Kyerematen is an amiable character. He has been Kufuor's friend for several years and, perhaps as a result of this friendship, there is a widespread perception that Kufuor is providing financial support for Kyerematen's candidacy.

¶4. (U) Despite his status as a front-runner, Kyerematen is not assured victory primarily because he is not widely known outside the NPP and many see him as a political newcomer. He also faces significant hurdles in that he is not a dynamic campaigner and he could face problems with perceived corruption. If Kyerematen garners a sizable chunk of Kufuor's support within the party, however, he could win the nomination. However, an outright victory seems unlikely and we expect in this close process to see a run off, which we believe will disadvantage Kyerematen. If, for example, a run off occurs between Kyerematen and either Akuffo-Addo or Vice President Mahama, we expect the other NPP candidates will not support Kyerematen for the reasons listed above. However, Kyerematen's

campaigners claim he leads by convincing margins in the race among delegates from Ashanti, Central, Brong Ahafo and Greater Accra regions.

Nana Akuffo Addo's Designs on the Presidency

¶15. (U) Former Foreign Minister Nana Akuffo-Addo sees himself as the natural successor to Kufuor. He was Kufuor's rival in the party's 1998 nomination and is widely regarded as the most experienced politician with international connections in the NPP. Many important chiefs and traditional leaders in the Eastern region are reportedly lobbying for him ever since leaked Bureau of National Intelligence (BNI) polls revealed that he was the strongest candidate in his native Eastern Region (ref A). But as he moves toward the nomination, he will need support from outside his home region. While Akuffo Addo is an Akyem royal and is often seen as elitist and arrogant, his campaign staff does not seem too worried about these portrayals. However, some NPP activists fear he would lose a general contest to the NDC flag-bearer John Atta Mills.

Aliu Mahama, as the President's Best Apprentice

¶16. (U) VP Aliu Mahama's campaign focuses on his achievements as Vice President for seven years. Mahama, who is Muslim and hails from Ghana's north, has publicly declared himself "the president's best apprentice." His campaigners forcefully argue that the NPP's ability to win the December 2008 election ultimately depends on the overriding importance of selecting a non-Akan, President Kufuor's ethnicity, to be the party nominee. According to this view, another Akan candidate could threaten NPP support in four regions: Volta, Northern, Upper East and Upper West. However, other political observers have dismissed these claims, calling them tribal politics.

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¶17. (U) Mahama's chances of persuading enough Ashantis and Eastern delegates to support him are considered slim. Both regions control the largest number of delegates: Ashanti constitutes 17% while the Eastern Region has 12%. Mahama will need to swing almost half of the voting delegates from the two regions to win the nomination. Mahama also suffers a bit in his native Northern Region due to the NPP's inability to resolve the 2002 Dagbon conflict (ref B).

Identifying with the Rank and File

¶18. (U) Dan Botwe is an ambitious candidate and enjoys widespread support among the party's foot soldiers and youths, many of whom feel left out of Ghana's economic progress. Botwe was also General Secretary of the NPP during the last two elections, helping guide

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the NPP to two victories. However, in 2005, he waged an internal campaign to oppose President Kufuor's attempts to name a party chairman. Six months later, he lost his position as Minister of Information. He has since distanced himself from the Presidency but retains the support and respect of rank and file members who say they have little to show for their support of the NPP since 2000. He is also quietly backed by NPP Party Chairman Peter Mac Manu and other key members of the Party's Council of Elders (refs C and D). These ties worry other candidates, particularly Kyerematen.

How relevant is Osafo Maafo's Economic Background?

¶19. (SBU) Osafo Maafo, 64, is a quiet contender but just as ambitious as the others. His platform mainly focuses on protecting the country's macro-economic gains to foster foreign investment and economic growth. Osafo Maafo's wit, stature in the ruling party, grip on the economy and knowledge about government economic policies are unchallengeable. He has long been a leading member of Kufuor's government; first as Finance Minister and later Education and Sports Minister, although he was surprisingly dropped last April without

explanation by the presidency. He has faced allegations of corruption in the past, which could weaken his candidacy as corruption is likely to be a major issue for this election.

Can Hackman Ward off Health Fears?

¶10. (SBU) Hackman Owusu-Agyemang, 65, a former Water Resources, Works and Housing Minister, has solid credentials within the ruling party. He is also a tough party hack with a strong power base in the Eastern Region. He has been successful in business and has a solid background as an international civil servant. His background is impressive: party treasurer, Member of Parliament since 1996, former Foreign Minister in Kufuor's first term, and Minister of Interior. He operates cautiously and has so far kept himself busy in seven regions (Eastern, Central, Ashanti, Western, Greater Accra, Northern and Upper East). Even though he is technically Ashanti, he has always identified himself with the Eastern Region. He represents the conservative wing of the party and will likely garner the support of the old guard. Other candidates increasingly treat him as a contender, but spread unconfirmed stories about his poor health.

The Rest of the Pack tag along

¶11. (SBU) The rest of the pack is rounded out by Kwame Addo Kufuor, Papa Owusu Ankoma, Kwabena Frimpong-Boateng, Mike Oquaye, Baffuor Adjei-Bawuh, Felix Owusu-Agyepong, Kofi Konadu Apraku, Kwabena Agyepong, Jake Obetsibi Lamptey, Arthur Kennedy and Boakye Kyerematen Agyarko. None of these candidates is likely to poll very well in the nomination process, but they are probably angling for future roles in the next administration, should the NPP win the Osu Castle once again.

Looking Ahead

¶12. (SBU) The race remains relatively open at this point. Each candidate has strengths and liabilities and it remains difficult to predict a winner. Septel will look closer at the campaign and the NPP's internal dynamics.

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